

# THE MAID OF MELOS.

## A STORY OF THE DAYS OF ALCIBIADES.

BY JOSEPH B. COBB.

### CHAPTER I.

#### ATHENS. HER ODEUM.

EVENING had enveloped in its sable shades the fair city of Athens; and the inhabitants, wearied with the various labors of the day, were seen wending their way to their several abodes. Groups of young men were strolling leisurely along the streets, and loud shouts of hilarity, now and then breaking on the stillness of the evening, betrayed the approach of companies fresh from the arduous, though alluring exercises of the gymnasium. These were bright and happy times for the sons of Attica! The lessons and instructions of Socrates dispelled the tediousness of day—the splendid entertainments of Pericles and his band of admirers charmed the hours of evening.

The curtain of night has closed around, and the scene has changed. Crowds of both sexes, in dense and glittering columns, pursue the direction of a towering and magnificent edifice seen in the distance, its gigantic and gaudy proportions swelling upon the vision in the dim reflections of the twilight. Like a thing of magic, the odeum—that grand and unsurpassable model of ancient architecture, eclipsing all other like buildings in the splendor of its structure and the novelty of its design—the odeum, which will ever remain a lasting monument to the taste and genius of Pericles, had risen suddenly from its foundation, and stood the pride and ornament of the city. Still further, in the rear, was seen the summit of the Areopagus, where the god of war had stood upon his trial, and where still the laws upheld their majesty, and justice was impartially dispensed.

Still further on, the gloomy porticoes of the Parthenon frowned in the pale moonbeams—melancholy reflection does it bring to the mind of the classic reader! The stupendous monument of art, which drew the respect of Alaric and the second Mahomet, who dared not to raise against it their barbarian hands, has been since demolished by the leaders of armies belonging to countries claiming to be civilized. Wherever the lion banner of England has been planted, or her rapacious claws have gained a hold, all remains of art and taste, however ancient or elegant, disappear—as if she feared a comparison with the huge, shapeless piles of her own smoky metropolis!

The reign of Pericles, the era in which our story is placed, has been justly regarded as the most brilliant era in Athenian history. Art, at this period, had nearly exhausted itself in the sublimity of conception, the splendor of design and the wonder of execution. Science progressed with rapid strides—whilst wisdom

and philosophy, under the energetic researches of Socrates and his pupils, were unfolding their wings, and preparing for higher and more astonishing flights. Society and refinement had attained their zenith, and Athens abounded with pleasures, whilst it gloried in its strength, and bid haughty defiance to its enemies. Well directed, internal labor, displayed its golden fruits, and domestic pursuits were eagerly cultivated in the midst of luxury and temptation. So happy a union of these seemingly discordant elements had never before been witnessed, and Athens, since, has sighed in vain for its reappearance. The peace of the country, secured by treaties of comity and alliance with the principal neighboring powers, stood in no immediate danger of interruption, and whilst fully prepared for war, the Athenians revelled in their love of public shows and entertainments, and the shrewd Pericles took care to gratify their eager and morbid appetites.

On the evening in question,\* the interior of the odeum blazed with uncommon brilliancy, and its spacious area and ample rows of seats glittered with an array which would have dazzled the vision of Oriental Satraps. In a conspicuous and sumptuously furnished compartment on the first or lower gallery, sat the great ruler himself, clad in his flowing vestments of state, and holding in his hands the simple prizes which he himself chose to distribute amongst the successful performers. The entertainment was exclusively musical, and on the stage were seen various instruments, ready for the touch of the masters in this elegant accomplishment. Not far from Pericles, and separated from him only by a row of small Corinthian pillars, reclined the divinely moulded figure of the fair but voluptuous Aspasia—the most beautiful and fascinating woman in Athens, who had infused new spirit in its circles, and engendered a deference for females hitherto unknown in Greece. Her countenance gleamed with bewitching smiles, and love and passion sparkled from her bright, yet languishing eyes. Easy and unabashed in her manner, she was yet conscious of the universal buzz of admiration which her presence had excited among the thousands gathered within these charmed walls; and when even Pericles, who bowed notoriously at the shrine of her charms, had fixed upon her his eager and penetrating gaze, her appearance gave no tokens that it was observed.

“By Jupiter, Nicias, she would compare with the

\* Musical entertainments were not unfrequently given after night, but dramatic performances invariably at dawn of day.

goddess of love herself, as she now reclines and glances over the assembly," said young Clitus, the pupil of Agatharus the painter, a youth well known for his genius and social qualities.

"Venus will yet prove to be her mother," answered Nicias, in a strain of enthusiasm, "or else I will be consigned to the furies-gods; see, her very soul beams forth, as she now returns the ardent looks of Pericles—she presents him her hand—and, by the fates, he presses it openly to his bosom."

"Methinks, Nicias," said young Clitus, smiling, "we both know of *one*, who, if here, in the sight of such Heavenly charms, would not scruple, if his passions were excited, to hurl even the archon from the enjoyment of so much bliss, that he might, himself, partake—I marvel that he is not here."

"I do not marvel at all," returned Nicias, "for thanks to the potent spells of the wine god, we left him safely fastened in his embraces."

"I know not that such is the case," said Clitus. "His manner seemed to me more restless than usual, and I suspect that he is resolving some wild scheme."

"Better to have said some *mad* project," said Nicias, sneeringly, "for, in truth, he is more than half a mad-man."

"Hast thou heard aught," asked Clitus, "of his new born passion for the fair Nemea, whom Hippolitus brought with him from Corcyra?"

"Softly, my Clitus," said Nicias, "for that is a tender subject. Nemea has, in her turn, been abandoned—a fiercer flame sure has hold on him. Hast thou not marked his frequent excursions, solitary and at night? My eyes have been upon him—and as the net gathers its thick folds around him, I see that proud spirit subdued—that fierce temper brought under—the holiest objects balk not his intemperate and loose desires—the gods themselves are insulted and ridiculed if his aim can be accomplished. And yet the man was born to be great. I predict his future fortunes as well as his fall. Other than the fields of his native land will feel the power of his influence, and attest the vast conceptions of his genius."

"Take heed, young man, that thy words, unwarily uttered in a spirit of envy, bring not trouble on thy head. Beware lest the unlooked for fulfilment of thy thoughtless prophecy rankle not, one day, in thy bosom, and torture thy soaring spirit. *He*, of whom thou hast spoken, is well known to me. For years have I watched his progress. *He will rise* to high fortune, and guileful enemies may work his fall. Thou, Nicias, hast no kind feeling for that man, and seek to draw from thy unsuspecting friend incautious admissions. But look to it that 'the power of *his* influence' avert not all thy malignity."

The young men had turned as these words, gravely uttered, had fallen upon their ears, and, to their surprise, beheld the venerable figure of the philosopher, Socrates, who for some moments had been standing quietly behind them.

A frown contracted the brow of Nicias as he regarded the sage, and he muttered a reproach at being overheard. The philosopher observed the frown, and caught the words.

"Think not," he continued, "that I was a willing

listener to thy words. Thou art my pupil, Nicias, as well as him of whom thou hast been conversing. I never repeat. It is a rule will always recoil. Learn caution thyself, ere thou suspect others of eves-dropping."

The young men rose to offer their seats to the sage, but he declined, giving them to understand that he was on the point of leaving, as he had come for a special purpose which had now been answered. But still he left not, and was detained by a circumstance yet to be related.

The entertainment now opened. The musicians all occupied seats on the stage, with their instruments beside them. The first performers ranged themselves to begin. The arched roof and long galleries rang with sounds of ravishing melody, and the spectators listened with feelings of high delight. The beautiful Aspasia dispensed liberally her approving smiles; the great Pericles testified his pleasure, and the whole vast concourse moved in applause. The prelude had been most brilliant and successful. And now separate trials of skill were practised in turn by the various performers, eager to win from the hands of their powerful patron the coveted prizes. As the celebration was had during the feast of Panatheneia, (sacred to Minerva, the tutelary goddess of the city) the *rhapsodoi*, accompanying with their instruments, sang the praises of their ancient heroes—some chose for their theme the exploits of Hercules; others dedicated their verses to Harmodius and Aristogitan, the bold leaders in the war against the tyranny and misrule of the Piristratides. Others again revived the glories of the Argonautic expedition, and other champions of the golden fleece. Past deeds were arrayed and recited, and the silence told the effect.

These impromptu recitations, then so popular among the gay Athenians, were not unlike the mode of improvising practised in later ages by wandering troubadours, and now fallen entirely into disuse. Such, however, was the extravagant passion of the people of Athens for all public entertainments, that Pericles established prizes for him who could select the best theme, and recite the most stirring events.

The vocalists concluded their parts amidst evidences of the most general satisfaction, and the performers on the wind instruments now presented themselves. Among them was the young son of Menon, an opulent citizen, especially favored by Pericles and Aspasia. Years of toil and practise had been the price at which he attained his excellence, and no one among the contestants was thought capable of competing with him. The strongest demonstrations of joy from the company welcomed his appearance, and parting the fair locks which shaded his handsome countenance, he began his performance. All were hanging with eager interest on the rich tones; the performer was absorbed in the intricacies and beauties of his music—when suddenly a young man, clad in vulgar apparel, and staggering from the effects of wine, leaped on the stage, and struck the instrument from the hands of the astonished musician. The haughty Pericles raised his hand in indignation—the bright eyes of Aspasia flashed fire of resentment. The spectators rose to their feet with a simultaneous movement, as if intent on preventing

forcibly all further rudeness. But the intruder blanched not. With a proud step he advanced to the front of the stage, and throwing back with a haughty toss the thick cluster of curls, displayed a face eminently handsome, almost effeminately so; and was recognized by most of those present. But the large, brilliant eyes rolled fearfully—the pearly teeth were clenched, as if in anger—the veins of the neck were swollen with passion. He strode across the area with rapid steps, uneven and wavering—and drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead.

"By the gods above us, Clitus, it is the very man, it is Alcibiades," whispered Nicias. "Now for some brutal scene. His haughty temper will find vent before he leaves the stage."

His companion answered not, but kept his eye intently fixed on the strange being before him, turning now and then, as if to find some one in the assembly.

The intruder paused, and in harsh, impassioned tones addressed the spectators. "Are ye indeed Athenians, who witness such perversion of manhood, and appear charmed with such unseemly sounds? Shame upon you, and upon him who fosters such degeneracy," and he pointed to the archon with a fierce glance. "Your tastes are corrupted by the continued repetition of such scenes of unmanly prostitution. Is this harsh, grating instrument fit to engage a man—an Athenian? It is a mean art—this piping—suited only to slaves and barbarians. The Theban youth who know not how to discourse, may pipe away their lives—but we have Minerva for our patroness, and Apollo for our protector, one of whom threw away the creaking flute, and the other punished severely the besotted Marsyas who ventured to play upon it in divine presence. Let us then follow examples so illustrious. Let Athenians find a more manly instrument. The lyre requires no such hideous distortion of form and feature to extract its music, and the voice can accompany it. Let Athenians then banish these unmusical pipes—and adopt an instrument worthy of men."\* Thus saying, he seized upon a lyre which was near him, and swept over its chord with a master's hand. The touch seemed to electrify the spectators, and in surprise at this unexpected display of skill, they gradually resumed their seats. The fine, strong voice of the singular minstrel, mingled with his notes: and then was breathed forth in language, fervent and eloquent, the deeds of Athenian heroes. He recounted the glory of the great Themistocles—the brilliant triumph at Artemisium, "where Athens, the foundations laid of liberty's fair structure." The minstrel, warming with his progress, now changed his theme. He pictured the present glory of Athens—her pleasures—her people satisfied and flourishing, her strength and her resources. The fireside of every person, drawn in lively colors, was present before them, calm and quiet—whilst no untoward event from without menaced its tranquillity. Scenes of domestic bliss filled the imagination—all was spring time in the future—and all was cheerful and secure. A thrill of delight shot through every bosom—and the young musician ceased amidst rapturous shouts of applause.

Pericles adjudged him the highest prize—Aspasia, resplendent in smiles, greeted him with her bright eyes as he came forward to receive the honor. So-crates had beheld this strange scene where insolence had been so decidedly turned to account: where haughtiness had shown the power of will; and his venerable head was bent in abstracted reflection. He was gratified at the singular success of his powerful and popular pupil, whilst, at the same time, he deplored for Athens her subjection to such whimsical tyranny.

Concealed in the shadow of an Ionic pillar which supported the portico, was seated a fair young girl, disguised in a large, loose mantle, which enveloped her whole person. The eyes of this girl glistened with singular lustre—a tear-drop lingered upon the trembling lids—her bosom was burning with emotion—but it was the emotion of pride and not of weakness. The success which had crowned the musician brought rapturous joy to the heart of that fair, solitary creature. But he saw her not.

The long, circular rows of seats no longer held the masses, which a moment before pressed upon them. The wide galleries vibrated under the weight of retreating thousands, the streets were filled with groups of the delighted concourse—and the odeum was left to silence once more.

Many were the auguries consulted—the predictions uttered on that night, in which so strange a scene had happened—of the future greatness and supremacy of him who had acted the chief part. The star of the haughty son of Clinias culminated amidst the confusion he had created—and Alcibiades, though scarcely recovered from a fit of intoxication, swelled with the vaulting ambition which glowed within him.

## CHAPTER II.

### A NOCTURNAL VISIT.

By the pale light of the moonbeams reflected upon the waters, a magnificent galley was seen shooting over the smooth bosom of the Egean sea, directing its course toward the island of Eubœa, now dimly visible in the distance. A few hours previously, and the same galley had been safely moored at the foot of a street in Athens, and the inmates were evidently inhabitants of that city. Three persons were seen in the vessel, two of whom labored at the oars, whilst the third, moody and abstracted, was seated alone in the stern. This individual was elegantly attired, and his rich robes wafted to and fro in the fresh breeze which met them. His face was strikingly handsome—and the exquisitely arched eyebrow—and the long, flowing ringlets which fell gracefully and carelessly around his neck, as he sat with his figure vaguely shadowed in the shining mirror beneath, invested him with a peculiarly romantic appearance. The white foam of the sea dashed against the carved sides of the boat as it sped, swiftly propelled, to its destined haven. The waves of the classic Egean sparkled in the silvery light, and parted their waters as the galley glided along over the calm surface.

Innumerable ripples now disclosed that the pebbly sands of the beach were under them, and the green

\* Plutarch gives the outline of this scene. Vit. Alcib.



shore rose by degrees to their sight. The rowers, slightly shifting their course, steered slowly along the margin for a short distance, and then suddenly turned into a limpid basin or pool, formed by a current from the sea, and which was almost entirely shrouded by the surrounding exuberant shrubbery. Here the small anchor was cast—the oars were pulled in, and the galley rode upon the waters a few paces from the shore.

Roused from his reverie, the personage who occupied the stern seat, now rose to his feet, and springing actively ashore, bade the rowers remain where they were, and await his coming. He then struck into a small footpath, which, beginning at the water, wound along through the grove; and after walking rapidly for several minutes, stopped before a high stone enclosure, and applying a key to the fastenings of the gateway, opened it and plunged into the dark recesses within.

In the centre of the grove around him stood a building of great beauty and symmetrical proportions, though not remarkable for size. It was a temple, erected by the aristocracy of Athens, and dedicated to their favorite divinity, Apollo. A glittering row of Ionic columns studded the entire front and sides, which were finely cast and ornamented. A flight of marble steps conducted the visitor to the upper vestibule, at the base of which were two superb statues, one of Minerva, the other of Apollo. The doors were of splendid, massive material, coming to a point at the top, and so constructed as to admit the only light which penetrated the interior. The whole finish and design exhibited the rarest and most exquisite taste, and might have been considered a fair specimen of the great excellence which the Athenian artists had attained at that period in architectural science. It was also surrounded by an enclosed court, which included the grove, besides various buildings appertaining to the temple. The solemnities were conducted and the worship performed by a priest, of whom very little was known, except that he was reputed for piety, and the strictest morality of life. His auguries were held in general and high esteem; and on the eve of marriages among the high-born of Athens, the couples sought always, in the first instance, the holy ministrations of this temple, and the benefit of the priest's advice. In all the duties of his calling he was assisted by several priestesses, one of whom will hereafter engage in a more especial manner the attention of the reader.

Our hero, as we have already seen, had easily gained admission within the sacred bounds, and found himself faced by the images of the various divinities. Proceeding cautiously amidst the shadows of these Heavenly hosts, his attention was arrested by the soft murmurs of running water, which reminded him that he was near a fountain. The reservoir was shaped from the pedestal of a gigantic statue of the king of gods, which stood towering and frowning above him, impressing the beholder with that awe and respect justly due to one of his high and dread authority. An immense block of solid marble supported the left arm of the god, whilst on his right hand was chiselled the royal sceptre, which imaged his divine power and

undisputed supremacy. Our hero, however, with reckless impiety seemed utterly to disregard all these appalling symbols; and with an audacity which would have struck terror in most other bosoms, seated himself at the base of the column, and laved his hands and feet in the pure, refreshing element. The fierce glance of imperial Jove fell sternly upon him, as though rebuking the sacrilegious disposition which tempted a mortal to cleanse his flesh in a fountain sacred to his Heavenly majesty, and the surrounding deities seemed beholding, with looks of surprise, the daring man who so rashly ventured upon an act which might, in a moment of anger, have hurled even an immortal from the Olympic abodes. What wonder, then, that a thunderbolt launched from the unerring hand of the resentful god did not dash to atoms the bold transgressor! But the offence is not half told. A huge, shaggy dog, which belonged to the stranger, was imitating the recklessness of his master, and lapped up the sacred water to cool his thirst, as if he had been drinking from a pond in some obscure alley of the city! And the master smiled and glanced with a mischievous leer at the surrounding deities.

Having thus occupied himself for several minutes, he withdrew his feet from the basin, and leaning his head against the column, and drawing around him the mantle in which he was clad, he seemed to gaze with intense earnestness at the resplendent glories of the Heavens. The pale moon was speeding onward in her mighty course, and the bright stars twinkled in his vision with unusual brilliancy. Not a cloud interposed to obscure the celestial bodies; all beamed with their mild, shining effulgence. But far toward the horizon was seen a narrow, scarlet streak, as if flames of fire burned within its bosom. Occasional and quick flashes would, now and then, illumine its whole extent with a vivid, lurid glare, and then the brightness would again appear. Upon this was the eye of our hero resting, and the alluring dreams of ambition floated through his lofty mind. The marble features of the statue which towered above seemed not more inanimate than the countenance of that solitary being—the cold, steady gaze of the god had been imparted to the aspiring mortal below. No flush of emotion was discernible, intense reflection had apparently absorbed all traces of humanity. Suddenly there appeared to his sight one of these astonishing and unaccountable phenomena, which, we are told in ancient times, so often foreshadowed important events, or revealed to mortals lively glimpses of the fate before them. The red, narrow streak was seen rapidly contracting, and presently it had assumed the shape of a concentric circle. From a given arc of this flaming circle a meteor blazed forth with a quick flash, and following its appointed course spanned the entire margin, leaving the whole tipped with the pale glare of its lurid radiance. Then issued from within the body, thus strangely lighted, eccentric trains of phantasmagoria, which none but a feverish and excited mind could have engendered. Here, restless mortal, was a mirror spread before thine eyes which may image thy future destinies! A line of triumphal cars succeeded each other rapidly, and as rapidly faded from view. Then the panorama of a vast city

was figured in the burning circle; and in the dim distance an object indistinctly resembling the Acropolis of his native Athens. On the summit a dark figure appeared. A nearer view disclosed his own features in those of the phantom. A zone of fiery meteors crowned the head, but disturbed not the calm expression of the face. The figure paused, and then arose the form of a lovely and benign female, bearing in her hand a brazen plate, on which was engraved the solitary word Wisdom. It beckoned to the figure—the call was unheeded. Presently was seen advancing from the gloom beyond another female, whose dashing steps and seductive smiles drew the earnest attention of the figure. Wild enthusiasm beamed in every lineament; pride and sternness marked her imperious brow. She gave no imitation as Wisdom had done, and the dark figure followed with imploring hands. His first step conjured up a third phantom, decked in all the voluptuous garnishments which allure and tempt the weakness of humanity. Heavenly beauty was hers; and enchanting attitudes of grace and meretricious blandishments arrested the eager step of the frail aspirant in his pursuit of ambition, and won him to the attractive arms of Pleasure. And then the glittering tiara of meteors fell to his feet, and lost their brightness; and a dark veil divided him from the Syren who had seduced him. And the margin was no longer tipped with its electric glare, and the burning circle was melting into chaos—and the solitary figure of the seeker receded from the vision, whilst hosts of grim and hideous phantasies flitted in the obscurity. The sight of our beholder was sickened, and his bounding heart sank as his accompanying genius whispered in his ear the interpretation of the phenomenon. Yet his high spirit revolted not, and his mind still wandered in ambitious abstraction. The dark figure was *alone* on the summit of the Acropolis. His power was *not divided*—though lost by restless pursuit, and tempted by seductions. Ere the veil could drop, glory and power and renown might be obtained, and the triumphal cars might whirl through the streets of Athens, himself the honored hero. The path was before him—the end was in view—the whole had been figured to him. A land overflowing with resources opened before him, and a population, the most spirited and accomplished in the world, breathed and moved around. Pretexts were easily found—his influence in the public councils, young as he was, astonished all Greece—his soaring mind expanded with his reflections, and the cold dreamer emerged into the conquering hero. He was averse to longer inaction, and the glorious peace which for years has blessed and developed thy prosperity, Athens, hangs heavily on the heart of thy young citizen! Fame and aggrandizement must be attained through seas of thy best blood; worlds of thy treasure must sustain them! The dreamer conceived and matured his mischievous plan of operation; and Greece was to become the scene of action. But in order to nourish the flame of enthusiasm which already kindled at the mention of his name, some brilliant preliminary achievement in connection with the popular athletic sports of the age must be accomplished. This would fix attention—would throw around him a species

of notoriety, essential at that time in all attempts and struggles for elevation.

The thoughts matured that night were afterward thoroughly fulfilled. In thy person, son of Clinias, Athens beheld a being whose towering and universal genius—whose unvarying success stripped the laurel wreaths from the brows of her ancient heroes—which covered her classic shores with unfading renown, and has filled her history with its most resplendent pages.

From behind a neighboring statue another figure now stealthily approached. His purple vestments at once indicated his sacred calling—but his words dispelled the illusions of his sanctity, and were strangely inconsistent with the priestly decorum.

"By all the gods, it is my Alcibiades? Why, man, thy attitude caused me some sharp misgiving as to thy identity; but thy uncleanly beast there reassured me. It is not the wont of the most famous debauchee in Athens thus silently to indulge in meditation. But what, in Apollo's name, ails thee?" he continued, suddenly recoiling. "Has Bacchus proven an overmatch for the allurements of Venus?—or are the arms of the lovely damsel forgotten in other and fresher pursuits?"

The priest was abashed and awed by the cold, stern gaze which had met his disgusting and licentious ribaldry. The time was inappropriate. The haughty and abstracted dreamer lost, for the moment, in sublime reflection, rose to his feet, and bent his piercing eye upon his companion. That lofty, withering look was long remembered; and though Alcibiades recalled himself in an instant, the priest was not so easily restored. Accustomed to familiarity, and to minister, in his way, to the impure tastes of the Athenian, the priest had ceased, in some measure, to respect the high pretensions and overshadowing talents of his friend—and he trembled now as he pondered the rudeness of which he had been unwarily guilty. But Alcibiades seizing his hand, relieved his uneasiness by the wonted cordiality of address.

"Ha, my old Calyx, hast thou come at last! Many long and weary hours have I been awaiting thee, anxious for thy tidings. But where is my sweet Callesthenia—the fair priestess whom thou hast dedicated to our gracious and benign Apollo?"

"Callesthenia awaits thee in her private apartment," answered the priest. "Her anxiety at thy prolonged absence has been great, and both father and daughter have feared that in the revels and excitement of the city, the powerful Alcibiades will soon forget the friends of early days, and banish from his mind all lingering impressions of the poor maiden who once claimed his love."

"Then do father and daughter do me most signal injustice and cruel wrong," said Alcibiades—"think not I forget you. Callesthenia reigns supreme in my heart—and whatever policy may dictate, or prudence enjoin in a career yet unknown, I shall ever own the gentle influence of her sway. And now I must see her. Haste away, old man, and inform her of my presence."

A small, neat building near the temple was occupied as a residence by the priest and his fair daughter, the latter of whom had, recently, by the suggestion of

her imperious lover, undertaken the melancholy duties of priestess in quality of first assistant to Calyx. They were natives of Melos. Whilst yet a young man, and in the dawn of his amazing career, Alcibiades had journeyed to that distant and romantic isle, near the borders of the Mediterranean, where, at a public festival, he had seen and loved the daughter of Calyx. He conveyed them to the shores of his native Attica, unwilling to resign his fervent attachment. This was hazardous. But the intermarriage of one, born of a high Athenian family with a foreigner, or a woman of low origin, was not sanctioned by custom, though not strictly prohibited by law. Yet it blasted all prospects of elevation. The young Athenian was, then, forced either to abandon forever the object of his fondest affections, or else to adopt some plan which might unite them without the public forms of a nuptial ceremony. Calyx was a man of base morals, and yielding readily to the fascinations held out by the great wealth and high standing of Alcibiades, consented to abet his projects and sacrifice his only daughter at the shrine of power and greatness. At length the Athenian, whose riches were immense, and whose influence great, doubtless from a dim presentiment of his future glory, determined to procure for the dissolute Calyx the situation of priest to Apollo, in the private temple of that god in Eubœa, and to dedicate the daughter to the same holy office. By this criminal precaution suspicion was entirely kept down, though among the watchful enemies of the rising man, there were not wanting those who soon found means to ferret out the object of his mysterious excursions on the Egean after night.

Let us now ascertain more particularly the situation in which the Athenian hero, yet young in his career, found himself placed. By an existing law of the land, founded upon experience and usage, all who wished for political or military elevation, or aspired to renown, must first become the head of a family, and must be the possessor of a permanent or real estate. These being wisely regarded as the surest guarantees of good faith, and the firmest basis of allegiance, the law was vigorously held and enforced. The hero then of so many battles, though only a subordinate—so distinguished for versatility of genius, and so celebrated for courage—who excelled pre-eminently in all athletic sports, and was becoming the most popular man in Athens—this hero could not bring himself to crush, by an imprudent alliance, such fair openings to greatness. A patrician in every sense of the word, whose connection was traced even to the renowned Ajax, and who was the kinsman and ward of Pericles, could never stoop to humble himself with those around him—but his lofty and arbitrary will would brook no opposing obstacle to the attainment of his desires. He loved passionately the fair Melian, and to enjoy this love, free from detection, he scrupled not to violate the sanctity of religion, and pollute the altars of his fathers. He was at once polite and self-willed—affable and haughty—virtuous and profligate, but never constant. Yet every advantageous circumstance of birth and fortune—talents natural and acquired—rare accomplishments of mind and body pleaded an exception in favor of

this extraordinary character, which, producing at once flowers and fruit, united with the blooming vivacity of youth the refined wisdom of experience.

Such was Alcibiades—and now what of the fair, but humble Cælesthenæ! Thou shalt not be passed over, sweet one, for that quickening spirit which enlivens thy bosom was not bowed down under obscure birth! Thou wert not unworthy of thy high born lover; thy softer sex needed but small allowance had the path been but open.

An orphan in early life—and left to the care of a negligent father, Cælesthenæ had given way to all the wild ardor and impetuosity of her nature. She had met with no crosses—she had forced none to engage her affections, or who called into life the warm feelings which slumbered around her heart. She knew not of what she was capable, she was the child of nature—filled with nature's impulses. She learned the use of musical instruments, and her voice was one rich and enchanting strain of melody. She danced most gracefully, and many a Melian swain sighed to possess that divine and faultless form. She excelled to an extraordinary degree for her sex, in riding, and in the noble art of managing the reins. She was fond of chariot driving—and men stopped to inquire the name and birth of the lovely and daring female who dashed through their groves and retreat, foremost in all rides and contests, and whom all admired. Such rare qualities in a woman could not fail to attract the attention, and win the regard of a man like Alcibiades when witnessing their display. He sought and wooed her—and her ardent soul soon gloried in the rapture of a congenial spirit—found and appreciated. The whole fullness of her heart, beating with the strong fires of love, were centred in this sole object of her devotion—and the Athenian saw that her very existence was merged in his. Protestations and persuasion soon won her to his wishes, and he determined to surrender neither his brilliant prospects, nor abandon the gratification of his passion. Cælesthenæ wound herself around every penetrable avenue of his heart, and vowed eternal fidelity, and begged never to be separated from him. The proud woman who had disdained others worthy of her in a wordly sense, was now the slave of a superior genius, the minion of a master spirit.

All women, capable of loving, and whose souls are alive to the soft glowings of love ardently bestowed, are apt one day to find a like influence. The bonds of the marriage rite itself cannot, alas! always prevent or obstruct its sway. Love may be bought or coaxed, or in some cases even forced—but where a fine woman, gifted with true, unbridled nobility of soul sinks voluntarily into the arms of the little blind god, be sure she has found the spirit or genius who owns the magic ring which enslaves her. But we must return to the characters in question.

The priest having ascended the steps which conducted him to the small, tasteful portico in front of the house, opened the wicket to admit his illustrious guest. Alcibiades was ushered into a small, circular room, fitted up with cushioned benches for the entire circumference—and ornamented with the various articles of furniture peculiar to the age. Reclining

carelessly, and unfolding the long mantle in which he was enveloped, he awaited the appearance of Calessthenia.

A few moments only had passed ere she entered. Rushing with a wild bound to the recumbent hero, the young girl seized both his hands in hers, after the fashion of the early Greeks, and imprinted upon his lips and cheeks kisses of burning love and welcome.

"Oh, what an age hast thou been absent!" she murmured, as she parted the glossy locks from his forehead. "But I have been faithful—I have thought only of thee—I place thee before even the deity to whose service thou hast doomed me. Thou hast made me sin, beloved. I venture an awful hazard, *but I would do the same for thee again*. Only these terrible vows—these gloomy, mock solemnities, which I appreciate not. Oh! they torment me!"

Alcibiades in a thrill of pleasurable emotion caught the lovely being in his arms, and rapturously folded her to his bosom. Glory and ambition were forgotten—banished in that one short moment of bliss. The pressure of that warm and throbbing form would have dispelled malice from a demon of darkness! It might have caused a god to forget his divinity, and bend to the weakness of humanity. A stern, aspiring man of the world totters on the brink of a precipice when a blooming, impassioned, loving woman rests in his arms! And Alcibiades ceased to ruminate on his destiny. The long ringlets of soft, light brown hair waving to and fro around the neck and shoulders of Calessthenia, disclosed at intervals the exquisite mould of neck and bust; and exposed a pair of dark eyes, sparkling with passion, and brightly gazing upon the features of him whose glowing breast pillowed her head. The costly robe which was worn over the short tunic, swept around in undulating folds; and unclasping the golden buckle which bound her girdle, the heavy vestments were thrown off, leaving only the finer, thin draperies which enveloped the voluptuous figure.

And Calessthenia had forgotten her vows in her ecstasy—the priestess was lost in the woman. Alcibiades was with her—held her in his fond embraces, and him she worshipped more than Apollo; veneration for the god was disregarded in her love for the man.

The wild dreams, which, just before, had floated through his soaring mind, were dispelled as chimeras; and power and aggrandizement vanished "like baseless fabrics of a vision seen" from his thoughts as that divine form, filled with emotions of rapture, nestled in his bosom! The future dictator of Greece was, for the time, the entranced victim of passion! Such is humanity, even when extraordinarily endowed! His murmuring whispers assured the Melian of the continued love which burned within him—and the girl pressed him more fondly and was happy. They were both happy!

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE OLYMPIC GAMES. MYSTERIES.

It is well known to every reader of general history, that the ancient Greeks were remarkably scrupulous

in observing the various games which they supposed to have been instituted by their gods. Among all these, according to approved authors, those celebrated at Olympia, a town of Pisa or Elis, in Peloponessus, held, unquestionably, the highest rank. They were sacred to Jupiter, the greatest of gods—they were instituted by Hercules, who stood foremost among the heroes—and they were solemnized with more pomp, amidst a larger concourse of spectators from every quarter of the confederacy, than any of the rest. They recurred every four years; at which period, so profound was the reverence felt for them, that there was a general amnesty and cessation of arms throughout all Greece, that all persons who were desirous might be present with perfect security.

At this particular period of their history, the Greeks were infatuated with an inordinate taste for all varieties of public sports and exhibitions, and to this fact historians trace the sources of their decline, the "beginning of their end." As yet, however, the manly and vigorous exercises had not been supplanted by the effeminate and enticing amusements of the theatre. Sophocles and Eschylus had not attained their popularity and celebrity—the buffoonery of love comedians would have been laughed to scorn. Honorable, and not mercenary motives were, as yet, the incentives of success.

The awards distributed among the victors in the games were of various descriptions, but, as is well known, always simple and unostentatious. At the Olympic games, the only prize sought for was a wreath of olive branches, ingeniously woven together, and so shaped as to fit the human head. The victor was also presented with a branch of palm, which, according to Plutarch, was a custom derived from a peculiarity of the tree, which displays new vigor under every repeated exertion to bend it, and was indication of the champion's courage and perseverance. Such toil and energy for a remuneration comparatively so trivial, was not without service to the Greeks as a nation; and we are told that on one occasion, an officer of Xerxes's grand army, when hearing the fact mentioned, exclaimed to Mardonius, "against whom are you leading us? Insensible to interest, these men fight only for glory." And, in fact, the Greeks thought nothing equal to a victory in these games. It was regarded as the perfection of glory, and, we are assured by ancient writers, that a military triumph was scarcely looked on as a higher honor. At all events, excellence in these sports was considered as an indispensable pre-requisite in the qualifications of a great commander. Hence the most eminent men of the age frequently entered the lists as contestants. Kings, princes, heroes and generals combatted for the honors, for there was not so sure a path to the hearts of the people.

There were numerous parts or divisions of the games, but as our purpose is not legitimately connected with all, we leave the reader, not already acquainted, to make up the deficiency by his own resources.

As it had been widely circulated on the present occasion that Pericles and his gay suite, and Agesilus, brother to the Spartan monarch, with his beautiful and accomplished sister, Cynisca, who was so famed



for her wonderful equestrian achievements, together with all the leading men of the country, would grace the celebration with their presence—thousands from Greece and the neighboring isles flocked to enjoy the grand and ancient repast. Public curiosity had been inflamed to an unusual height—and expectation bounded in every heart. All had some friend or favorite for whose success they felt deep solicitude.

At length the morning dawned, "big with the fate" of many ardent and anxious aspirants. Five days were allotted for the exercises. The last was selected for the chariot races to be contested.

The sun rose in cloudless splendor to illumine that brilliant scene—and the salutations of thousands welcomed the happy omen. The colossal statue of Jupiter Olympus, which adorned the entrance to the stadium, looked pleasingly upon the immense concourse of devotees beneath, as if reflecting the gracious smiles of the god whom it represented. A long row of magnificent pavilions lined the extent of the area, from which floated the symbols of the various nations assembled. The neighboring country was adorned with rich and handsome porticoes, interspersed with shady groves and walks, where the candidates for Olympic fame rested from their anxieties and fatigues. Imagination must fill up the picture—for description is vainly essayed.

Long previous to the hour, the athletes were seen parading through the grounds, as if to exhibit their persons to the eager crowd before whom they were soon to engage in their perilous sports. Two of these seemed to attract particular attention. They were Anytus, of Athens, and Arrachion, of Sparta, who were to enter the lists of the Paucratium. The Spartan was the more active and alert—the Athenian was noted for strength and muscular power. Their step denoted great flexibility of limbs, whose sinewy and solid proportions exhibited the force and practice of the combatants. No small degree of rivalry existed between the two nations in anticipation of the issue of this combat, the most dangerous of all the Olympic exercises.

Now a more brilliant group drew forth the admiration of the beholders. All along the banks of the Alpheus, whose crystal waves flowed at the marble base of the stadium, beautiful females were seen promenading and catching the fresh, pure breezes of the morning. The whole terrace presented one glittering array—for females (by authority of some of the best authors) were *not* excluded from either seeing or partaking in these sports.

In the midst of this assemblage, the stately form of Cynisca, the Spartan heroine, was particularly distinguished. A short tunic, reaching not far below the knee, served to display her elegant proportions. A fillet, wrought of golden cords, and fastening with small clasps of the same metal, confined her long, auburn hair; whilst on her arms was seen the glittering effulgence of bracelets set with the most precious stones. A small, flat hat covered her head, and her feet were enclosed in red slippers, confined by slender thongs, which met under the sole. Though the descendant and sister of kings, this young woman had become famous for her success in the chariot

racés, which was the only part of the games suited to female propriety.\*

At the other extremity was seen another figure not less remarkable for its faultless proportions and dignified demeanor than Cynisca herself. A long robe reaching from the shoulders to the feet, almost entirely concealed the fine form, but the outlines, save now and then, were sufficient to exhibit its extreme neatness. A mask covered the features, and invested the wearer with an air of mystery, which many were anxious to divine. She joined no company, and made no advances to such females as sought to share her promenade. A solitary walk in the balmy air of early morn was the object of her appearance—and not the desire for admiration. Yet she was admired—and as the breeze sweeping down the current lifted the folds of her robe, and pressed them closer around that peerless figure, a thrill of emotion pierced the beholder. Hold to thy mask, fair one, and suffer not the rude wind to penetrate thy disguise, and expose to view the beauty underneath!

Not far from the hippodrome was Calimachus, the representative of the king of Syracuse, surrounded by his grooms and horses, and standing in front of a spacious and magnificent pavilion which blazed with the royal insignia. He it was, who, by order of his master, had solicited the honor of contesting the chariot race with Alcibiades and Cynisca.

Lastly, a collection of tents, a short distance from those of Calimachus, were pointed out as belonging to Alcibiades; filled with his noble steeds, collected from all parts of Greece and her dependencies. Such was the popularity of this wonderful man among the neighboring potentates—such the fame of his skill in the management and direction of horses, that voluntary contributions were made by all in emulation of each other to the supply of his stables, and to furnishing elegant equipages, together with all else necessary to sustain his incredible displays of splendor. The wealth of no one private person could have sufficed for such enormous expense.

Contiguous to his own, Alcibiades had caused to be erected a small circular pavilion of exquisite beauty and taste, handsomely decorated, and to which no one was allowed admission. The tenant was unknown—almost unsuspected—and the entrance was ever guarded by an immense shaggy dog, whose watchful eye and fierce look kept all prying intruders at their proper distance. It was connected with the tent of Alcibiades by a narrow passage of drapery impenetrable to the eye, as no shadow had been seen crossing the aisle from one to the other. No one had been observed to enter within these forbidden bounds except a sprightly, comely youth—an attendant upon Alcibiades. He wore always a full mantle, which covered the head and sheltered the entire body. The awe universally felt for his powerful master preserved him from the annoyances of impertinent curiosity, though some there were who had strange doubts as to the character of that fair, unknown boy.

If the reader has not already guessed as much, I

\* Many authors attest this fact—and there can be no doubt that Cynisca often contested these races.



must frankly say that the tenant of that mysterious pavilion was no other than Callesthenia, the fair priestess of Apollo. A strange place for a priestess truly, but yet nevertheless true! She it was who had adopted the disguise, as well to hide her sex as to avert suspicion from her lover, knowing that he was closely watched by jealous, malignant, and crafty enemies. And she was right! By permission of Alcibiades she had accompanied him to the games, that she might once again indulge her wild inclinations in contesting under his auspices the honors of the chariot race. In a glow of fondness, unfortunate for both, he had consented to her entreaties—for the stern man loved that frail girl with a passion which could refuse nothing! And on the morning in question she had arisen at an early hour, and directing her steps to a secluded spot on the banks of the Alpheus, almost hid by the intersection of olive branches which fell around, had there dismantled herself of the disguise, and fastening on her light mask, appeared on the promenade as noticed above.

These games were intimately interwoven with the whole civil, military and religious polity of Greece, and as evidence of this, the most aged of her distinguished men were selected to preside at their celebration. These were called *agonothetæ*.

And now they had ascended the throne erected for them at the further extremity of the stadium, which was the signal for the exercises to begin. On a small altar piece near the throne sat the priestess of Ceres, and the other virgins who were permitted within the area. Opposite to these were placed the statue and emblems of the chaste Diana, supported on the tomb of her favorite Endymion.

The contests usually began with the foot races, then followed boxing, wrestling, throwing the discus and javelin, and leaping. The contestants in these various sports were ranged in a line before the *agonothetæ*, who inspected their qualifications. It was required that they should be born in Greece, or in the countries connected with her government. In the other games this was not the case, as the chariot racing was free for all, whether alien or citizen, with certain restrictions. Fraud and artifice were vigorously excluded from the games; and the maxim so generally then in vogue, that deceit or valor were the same in overcoming an enemy, was not held good at these sacred celebrations.

The foot races were over—the boxing and wrestling were over, and the judges announced that the combat of the paucratium between Anytus and Arrachion, was next in succession. This being, as we have before said, the most rough and dangerous of all the sports, and the champions being from the two great rival states, the spectators, with eager interest, crowded around the area in which the combat was to be tried. This game united boxing and wrestling, and is derived from two Greek words, which signify that the whole strength of the body was necessary for success.

Anxiety had reached to an almost irrepressible intensity when the champions leaped simultaneously on the area before the vast crowd. Their only apparel was a leathern girdle around the waist, to which was

suspended a fringed scarf of short dimensions. Their bodies had been anointed with oil in order to render their limbs flexible and supple—and to assist them in eluding the grasp of their adversary. Not a word was spoken as they now approached each other cautiously and vigilantly in order to gain the first advantage. Some time was spent in these harassing feints—and then the stout Athenian aimed a blow at the head of his antagonist, throwing himself violently forward at the same time, as if to force him to grapple. But the eagle eye of the active Spartan had watched every motion—and though partially receiving the blow, he eluded, with surprising address, the attempted grasp, and his imprudent antagonist fell to the ground. Arrachion leaped upon him with the spring of a tiger, and seizing his throat, endeavored to hold him down until he should be forced to cry for quarter.

But he mistook the fierce and indomitable spirit of the Athenian. Exerting his immense strength, Anytus half rose, bearing the full weight of his antagonist, and struggling for breath under the severe grasp which held his throat. Finding it impossible to disengage himself, he dealt the Spartan a blow on the chest, the violence and force of which rendered the face of the one a pale, purplish contrast to the blackened and distorted features of the other. The blood now started in torrents from the eyes, nose and ears of Arrachion—whilst the swollen tongue of the Athenian hung long and loosely from the mouth.

Looks of horror and disgust settled upon the faces of the vast concourse around—and the *agonothetæ* in vain gave the signal for the combat to be suspended. The priestess of Ceres and her virgins averted their eyes from the ghastly spectacle. Groans and hisses were smotheringly sent forth from the crowd; but in the meantime the antagonists were again rolling in the dust, the fearful hold of the Spartan still unrelaxed, while Anytus elicited universal applause by his incredible displays of strength. He had seized Arrachion with the left hand, and holding him by main force high up from the ground, endeavored, by repeated blows, to loosen his throat from a grasp which he felt was fast wearing away his strength, and impairing his efforts.

But blows availed not. The wily Spartan had from the first perceived that all his hope depended upon the advantage he had gained—and that if his hold was once broken, the great strength of his adversary would soon overpower him. Again both fell to the ground, and Anytus now suffering the most acute anguish from the suppression of breath, would roll over and over, carrying along the Spartan as though the weight was nothing.

At length, in his frantic and desperate struggles his hand by chance came in contact with the foot of his obstinate adversary. Approaching death lent him new strength for the moment, and he crushed and mangled the bones as though an egg shell were in his grasp. The sudden and exquisite torture obliged Arrachion to release his hold, and shout for quarter at the very moment that Anytus breathed his last.

The vanquished Spartan lay beside his dead adversary panting, almost breathless, and groaning with agony, whilst the *agonothetæ* proclaiming Anytus the

victor, crowned his inanimate temples with the wreath of success.

The sports ended for the day; the dense masses of spectators moved from the stadium to their various places of rest. That night a light was seen dimly shining through the covering of the small circular pavilion attached to the tent of Alcibiades. The lovers were together, and the Athenian reclined upon a splendid couch, whilst the fair Melian knelt caressingly by his side, playing in child-like simplicity with the long, curling locks which fell over his face.

The lofty brow of Alcibiades was bent in thought: and the mellow eyes of Calessthenia fell droopingly upon him. She wished not that aught else save love should share that endearing solitude. Now and then she would press her glowing bosom to his in the hope to recall him from his abstraction, and to bury dreams of ambition in the alluring embraces of love. But her charms were unable, at that moment, to entice the restless spirit from its wanderings.

The eventful morrow was close at hand, on which his hopes were fixed. Upon the issue of these hopes the destinies of Greece depended. Success in the game was sure to bring a speedy realization of his dreams and projects—failure would be irretrievable ruin. As a tribute to his skill and fame, the Syracusan monarch had sent over his finest horses—his most elegant equipages—under charge of his ablest general and most renowned subject. The accomplished sister of Agésilas had publicly solicited the honor of matching herself with him in the race—and her distinguished and rising young brother was there in person to witness the contest.

Defeat, under such circumstances, and in such company would be not only mortifying, but must forever blast his prospects, and the aspiring man narrowly calculated his chances, and fully comprehended the consequences. And the fate of all Greece rested upon a chariot race, so great was the importance attached to these games.

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

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